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THE TOWN OF HUY.

Huy, a town of Belgium, in the province of Liege, stands on the shores of the little river Hoyoux, from which it derives its name. The position of the town is remarkably picturesque, and the hills around are clothed with luxuriant vines. The quaint old houses,

picture not easily surpassed for beauty, and not readily forgotten when once seen.

The chroniclers of the middle ages, and writers of modern times as well, claim for the town of Huy a good old age; it was founded,



THE TOWN OF HUY, IN BELGIUM.

the heavy roofs, the casement windows, the small bridge with its light railing, the little stream, so clear and still, the trees and creeping plants that have overgrown the rustic wall, and, towering above everything else, the church of Notre Dame—a noble building that has stood there for more than seven centuries—present a

so they say, in the first century of the Christian era, but for this assertion they appear to have no very conclusive evidence; however, that it was known in the seventh century, there can be no doubt at all. It was a great place in the days of Charles the Simple, and the most important town in the Bishopric of Liege. But long ago

its glory has departed. Before the year 1795 it contained fourteen parishes, one collegiate church, two abbeys, and seventeen convents; now the number of parishes is reduced to five, and the population is estimated at eight thousand.

In the Church of the Crusaders is the tomb of Peter the Hermit, but the Church of Notre Dame is the principal ecclesiastical edifice. The castle, built upon a rock, commands the city and the river Meuse, which divides the town into two parts and is spanned by a stone bridge of seven arches. This castle is of very ancient origin, but a great part of the first building was destroyed by Henry II. of France.

SIGNS AND OMENS.

Along with our Saxon ancestors there came into England some of the strangest notions and oddest fancies that we can well conceive. Albion had, without doubt, plenty of wild, unearthly stories when her sons ranged the forest, before those forests echoed to the tramp of the Roman legions. And no doubt from the City of the Seven Hills there came new superstitions, more wild and terrible than the wood-coloured savages had ever heard of before. Druidical serpent-eggs, and the rest of the mistletoe mysteries, were followed by the nymphs of the fountains, at the very sight of whom sane men were driven mad. But with the Saxons came an entirely new class of superstitions, some of them full of horror, some light and cheerful, some terrible as was ever giant-goblin story to a child's fancy; others beautiful and gay as the fairies that slept in the bell-flowers and floated on the zephyr. The chief part of the fancies, however, being those we are about to mention here, were connected with the most ordinary affairs of life, and invested every little circumstance with a peculiar and awful meaning. They beset the daily life of every man, woman and child in the country; and many of them are still preserved amongst us. Of course these things are now slighted, and, except he be a very unlettered peasant indeed, a man does not turn back in dismay at the sight of three magpies; but once these things were received as positively true, and were regarded with as much certainty as we might count on a tide or a change of the moon.

Imagine a man believing that all these little circumstances—the falling of a stone, the ticking of a death-watch, a tingling in the ear, a shivering sensation in the back, or any other similar trivial occurrence—really betokened some good or evil fortune, what a strange sort of a life he must lead!

A stork settles on a gable of his house. Welcome. To kill the bird would be open sacrilege, for the stork is a harbinger of happiness. He receives the visit with a feeling of delight, and hails it as a promise of good luck. When he goes out, a strange dog follows him: here again is another sign of prosperous fortune. A strange dog never follows any person without good luck speedily coming on the favoured one. Welcome to the dog. When night sets in, the man looks up on the shining points in the heavens, the jewels of the night, and notices a shooting star. Good luck again. He forms a wish before the star has disappeared, and the wish is certain to be gratified. Moreover, our friend is lucky altogether: he was born with a caul, and this is certain to render him remarkably fortunate, besides having the extraordinary effect of preserving anybody who buys it from a watery grave. People now-a-days are short of faith, and prefer life-preservers of another sort—such, for instance, as cork jackets. But our lucky friend, besides being born with a caul, having a stork on his house, a strange dog at his heels, and wishing himself good fortune as a shooting star flits over the face of the heavens, has found, unawares, some four-leaved clover, and on this account, as well as all the rest, is entitled to the best of luck all his life along. Fortunately, too, he has been seated, inadvertently, between a married couple at a dinner table, and this ensures a

“Home, and in the cup of life
That honey drop, a pleasing wife”

and at no distant date—within the twelvemonth, as sure as the zodiac.

But our friend suffers from rheumatism. What is he to do?

Go to the doctor?—nothing of the sort. Let him steal a potato, or, if he objects to steal one, let him beg, but on no account buy, one. If he prefers a chesnut to a potato, a chesnut will answer just as well. As long as he retains either in his possession, he is a safe man. Still accidents may happen, and sitting next his dearest friend, our lucky man lets fall some grains of salt upon the table. Spilling salt betokens a strife between the person who spills it and the person next to whom he sits. What is our friend to do in order to avert the omen? He must lift up carefully, very carefully, not leaving a single grain, the salt that is spilt, with his knife, and throw it over his shoulder. Nothing else will avert disaster. But what if he upsets the salt-cellar altogether? This signifies a shipwreck, and our friend may look out for squalls; there is fine weather now, but a storm is brewing, and the gallant little “Triton,” with a goodly cargo, will meet with accident—no doubt of that.

While our friend is thinking of these things, and trembling for his “Triton,” bound to the bottom as sure as ever scuttled ship was doomed, he feels a tingling in his ear. This satisfies him that some are talking about him. But what can they be saying? Are they telling up his good deeds, numbering his excellent qualities, writing up his virtues—like tombstone grief; or are they pointing out his weaknesses, condemning his vices, ridiculing his absurdities, and writing him down an ass? Which ear is it tingles? The right: then are his excellencies exalted. A tingling in the right ear is always a good omen. But, unfortunately, it is in the left—there is no mistake about it; the most subtle casuist cannot make left right, and right left. The talker talks with no respect of persons; he condemns our friend as a scoundrel, whispers all the idle gossip of the town, tells all the prattle—such prattle as people love to hear, though it be foul and dirty, and black as ink. All the stories that our friend would have kept secret are blazing forth, and he knows very well that the circle of listeners,

“Whatever they hear are sure to spread
East and west and north and south,
Like the ball which, according to Captain Z.,
Went in at his ear and came out at his mouth.”

When the left ear tingles, people talk ill of us; if it be so, some people's left ears must never leave off tingling. But what is to be done? Charm for charm. Our friend must bite his little finger; the evil speaker's tongue will be in the same predicament. Don't spare the little finger.

Our friend has been relating a remarkable story, the visitors have been all listening anxiously. “Is it true, is he quite satisfied of its authenticity?” Quite. Up stands our friend, when his chair falls backward, and falls on the ground with a crash. There is an audible titter. Our friend colours “ruddier than the cherry.” What does it mean? The falling of a chair is a sure sign that the person who sat in it has been guilty of untruth. Our friend is about to present a very choice knife to a fair acquaintance, but he knows very well that it may sever their friendship for ever. To give cold steel, scissors or knives, separates friendship between even the dearest friends. Therefore, some money, no matter how small a piece, must be paid—duly paid—and the affair be regarded as a purchase. Salt, also, must not be given; it must be bought, else unthought-of calamity is sure to follow. Our friend has plucked a water lily, that spread its broad leaves and white and yellow cups upon the water. No harm is done by this; but he has unfortunately slipped and fallen while he had it in his hand. What will be the result? Perhaps a bruise or two; nothing of the sort—but he will now be subject to fits. Moreover, he happens to have cut his finger rather deeply, and the manner which he takes to cure the wound is as simple as it is remarkable. He anoints the knife with oil, puts it into a drawer, and allows it to remain there for some days. Sympathetically the cut is cured. Our friend, likewise, entertains the notion that if he goes under a ladder he stands the chance of being hanged; that the consequence of such an imprudent act will in all probability be a long cord and a short shrift. Then, being once or twice detected talking to himself—like a modern Prince of Denmark—he is confirmed in the idea, for to soliloquise is the sure precursor of a violent death. And as our friend occasionally feels a cold shivering sensation in his back,